

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4204

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 331/1

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ILO, ELAB, BA

SUBJECT: ILO ACTIVITIES IN BAHRAIN

REFS: (A) STATE 003255 (B) STATE 017961 (C) MANAMA 0376

1. SUMMARY. TWO PROJECTS REMAIN OF THE ONCE MORE NUMEROUS ILO-ADMINISTERED ACTIVITIES IN BAHRAIN. IN EMBASSY VIEW BOTH ARE THEORETICALLY IMPORTANT TO THE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF BAHRAIN, BUT IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT WHILE ONE IS EXCELLENT THE OTHER IS ILL-CONSIDERED. GIVEN THE CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES SINCE IT WAS PROPOSED. ONE, THE NATIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEVELOPMENT UNIT, IS ON ITS WAY TO SUCCESS, WITH SOLID GOB BACKING AND COMPETENT ADMINISTRATORS. THE OTHER, THE HOTEL MANAGEMENT AND CATERING SCHOOL, IS IN VIRTUAL COLLAPSE. A THIRD PROJECT, DEVELOPMENT OF CONSUMER CO-OPERATIVES, HAS BEEN ABANDONED. GOB CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TWO ON-GOING PROJECTS ARE CONSIDERABLE HIGHER THAN THAT LISTED IN REF B. EMBASSY JUDGMENT IS THAT THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM IS CLEARLY RESPONSIVE TO IMPORTANT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURES. END SUMMARY.

2. MANAGEMENT TRAINING (BAH 73-007); STAFF: 5; FUNDING: UNDP (\$755,000), GOB (\$855,000); LOCATION: MUHARRAQ; DATES: 1/74-10/77. COMMENTS: THIS HOTEL MANAGEMENT AND CATERING TRAINING
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CENTER WAS THE BRAINCHILD OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED PLANNER IN THE GOB (CURRENTLY MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIES). WHEN IT WAS FIRST SUGGESTED, IN 1971, THE THOUGHT WAS TO CREATE A REGIONAL CENTER FOR THE TRAINING OF ARAB YOUTH TO RUN THE FEW MODERN HOTELS WHICH WERE EXPECTED TO SPRING UP IN THE REGION. AS IN SO MUCH ELSE THAT WAS PLANNED BEFORE THE 1973 OIL PRICE INCREASES AND RESULTANT FANTASTIC ECONOMIC BOOM IN THE REGION, IT WAS BASED ON

THE ASSUMPTION OF A READY AVAILABILITY OF EAGER, UNEMPLOYED YOUNG GULF

ARABS. SINCE 1973, MANY HOTELS HAVE OPENED (AND ARE OPENING), BUT THERE ARE NO UNEMPLOYED ARABS IN THE GULF TO SPEAK OF. FURTHER, CULTURAL FACTORS COME INTO PLAY WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN ARABS OPTING OUT OF PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS TO HOTEL AND CATERING SERVICES. THESE JOBS IN THE REGION ARE INCREASINGLY MANNED BY ALREADY TRAINED INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS, IMPORTED IN LARGE NUMBERS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF IS CONSIDERED COMPETENT BUT THAT OF THE FEW ARAB STUDENT TRAINEES WHO ORIGINALLY WERE RECRUITED ONLY A HANDFUL OF BAHRAINIS ARE LEFT (THOSE FROM NEIGHBORING STATES, WHICH INCLUDE OMAN, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND QATAR HAVE, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, DEPARTED). THE FORMER DIRECTOR (NORWEGIAN) HAS DECAMPED AND AN EGYPTIAN HAS RECENTLY TAKEN HIS PLACE. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT IT WILL RECRUIT NON-GULF ARABS, I.E., EGYPTIANS, JORDANIANS, LEBANESE, FOR TRAINING. HOWEVER, IF THAT IS TO BE THE CASE, THE GOB'S SIZEABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAM CAN BE EXPECTED TO CEASE FORTHWITH. COMMENT: A PROJECT, WELL-CONCEIVED, BUT WHICH HISTORY HAS PASSED BY. GIVEN THE CURRENT REGIONAL MANPOWER SITUATION AS WELL AS CULTURAL PREJUDICES WHICH WORK AGAINST INVOLVEMENT IN THESE VOCATIONS, ENTIRE CONCEPT PROBABLY SHOULD BE DROPPED. END COMMENT.

3. NATIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEVELOPMENT UNIT (BAH-74-0011); STAFF EIGHT; FUNDING: UNDP (\$298,711), GOB (\$695,731) AS OF JULY 1976 REVISED AGREEMENT; LOCATION: MANAMA AND MUHARRAQ; DATES 5/75-4/78. A VERY EXTENSIVE PROGRAM TO UPGRADE THE TECHNICAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES OF BAHRAINI NATIONALS. IT HAS IN EFFECT BECOME THE MAJOR PROGRAM OF THE GOB MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS WITH A SIGNIFICANT FIN-CONFIDENTIAL

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ANCIAL COMMITMENT FROM THE GOB. IT SEEMS TO HAVE CAUGHT THE IMAGINATION AND CERTAINLY MAINTAINS THE COMMITMENT OF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP; AMIR, PRIME MINISTER, ETC., CLOSELY ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES PUBLICLY WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE UNIT AND MOST MAJOR PRIVATE SECTOR EXECUTIVES HAVE JUDGED IT IN THEIR INTERESTS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SERIOUS TRAINING PROGRAMS AS WELL AS TO PARTICIPATE ON THE TRIPARTITE COUNCIL WHICH GOVERNS THE UNIT. THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM: TO UPGRADE POORLY EDUCATED, LOW-SKILLED BAHRAINI MEN (AND WOMEN) SO THAT THEY CAN GAIN WELL-PAYING JOBS AS MASONS, ELECTRICIANS, WELDERS, FABRICATORS, PLUMBERS, ETC., ACCURATELY REFLECT AND ARE RESPONSIVE TO THE VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE. VOLUNTARY APPLICATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN UNEXPECTEDLY LARGE AND THE GOB HAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY REQUIRED EVEN LOCALLY-OWNED PRIVATE FIRMS TO EMBARK ON TRAINING PROGRAMS. (SEE REFTEL C FOR EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT.) WE CONTINUE TO THINK THAT "VOCATIONAL TRAINING IS SEEN TO BE AT THE VERY CRUX OF BAHRAIN'S MANPOWER PLANS FOR THE COMING YEARS". COMMENT: THE PROGRAM APPEARS ESSENTIALLY SOUND. THE CHIEF ADVISOR (CANADIAN) IS WELL-KNOWN AND

WELL-RESPECTED. SUGGESTION: THE PROGRAM IS SO GOOD AND SO WELL RE-
GARDED LOCALLY THAT WE WOULD HAZARD THE GUESS THAT THE GOB WOULD FUND
THE ENTIRE PROJECT IF PRESSED TO DO SO BY UNDP. END COMMENT.

4. CONSUMER COOPERATIVES: (BAH-72-003 AND 74-009); PROGRAM ABANDONED
IN EARLY 1976. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY ABOUT THE
CONSUMER COOPERATIVE PROJECT WHICH WAS DROPPED IN EARLY 1976. WE
GATHER
FROM SOME SOURCES THAT ONE COOPERATIVE WAS ACTUALLY ORGANIZED (IN THE
MODEL TOWNSHIP SOUTH OF MANAMA), GENERATED SERIOUS LOCAL INTEREST
AND PARTICIPATION AND THEREBY PROVOKED A POTENT MERCHANT REACTION.

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 091341Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4205

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 331/2

THE MERCHANTS, WHEN PUSH CAME TO SHOVE, CONVINCED THE CABINET TO DROP
THE PROJECT. COMMENT: THIS APPEARS IN SKETCHY RETROSPECT TO BE ONE
OF THOSE PROJECTS WHICH LOOKED GOOD IN THEORY, AND DID GENERATE SOME
TARGET AUDIENCE INTEREST WHICH ULTIMATELY EMBARRASSED THE ESSENTIALLY
LAISSEZ-FAIRE GOVERNMENT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE POWERFUL MERCHANT
COMMUNITY. DESPITE ITS THEORETICAL ATTRACTIVENESS, PARTICULARLY IN
VIEW
OF CONCERNS ABOUT IMPACT OF INFLATION ON THE LIFESTYLES OF MIDDLE AND
LOW-INCOME BAHRAINIS, THE POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS OF THE COOPERATIVES
WERE TOO GREAT FOR THE GOB TO HANDLE.
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